

# ALFRED THAYER MAHAN

ADMIRAL FARRAGUT

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**Admiral Farragut**

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# **A. T. Mahan**

## **Admiral Farragut**

### **PREFACE**

In preparing this brief sketch of the most celebrated of our naval heroes, the author has been aided by the very full and valuable biography published in 1878 by his son, Mr. Loyall Farragut, who has also kindly supplied for this work many additional details of interest from the Admiral's journals and correspondence, and from other memoranda. For the public events connected with Farragut's career, either directly or indirectly, recourse has been had to the official papers, as well as to the general biographical and historical literature bearing upon the war, which each succeeding year brings forth in books or magazines. The author has also to express his thanks to Rear-Admiral Thornton A. Jenkins, formerly chief-of-staff to Admiral Farragut; to Captain John Crittenden Watson, formerly his flag-lieutenant; and to his friend General James Grant Wilson, for interesting anecdotes and reminiscences.

*A. T. M.*

## **CHAPTER I.**

### **FAMILY AND EARLY LIFE.**

#### **1801-1811**

The father of Admiral Farragut, George Farragut, was of unmixed Spanish descent, having been born on the 29th of September, 1755, in the island of Minorca, one of the Balearic group, where the family had been prominent for centuries. One of his ancestors, Don Pedro Ferragut, served with great distinction under James I, King of Aragon, in the wars against the Moors, which resulted in their expulsion from Majorca in 1229, and from the kingdom of Valencia, in the Spanish Peninsula, in 1238. As Minorca in 1755 was a possession of the British Crown, to which it had been ceded in 1713 by the Treaty of Utrecht, George Farragut was born under the British flag; but in the following year a French expedition, fitted out in Toulon, succeeding in wresting from the hands of Great Britain both the island and its excellent fortified harbor, Port Mahon, one of the most advantageous naval stations in the Mediterranean. It was in the course of the operations which resulted in this conquest of Minorca by the French that the British fleet, under the command of Admiral Byng, met with the check for which the admiral paid the penalty of his life a few months later. At the close of the Seven Years' War, in 1763, the island was restored to Great Britain, in whose hands it remained until 1782, when it was again retaken by the French and Spaniards.

George Farragut, however, had long before severed his connection with his native country. In March, 1776, he emigrated to North America, which was then in the early throes of the Revolutionary struggle. Having grown to manhood a subject to Great Britain, but alien in race and feeling, he naturally espoused the cause of the colonists, and served gallantly in the war. At its end he found himself, like the greater part of his adopted countrymen, called to the task of building up his own fortunes, neglected during its continuance; and, by so doing, to help in restoring prosperity to the new nation. A temper naturally adventurous led him to the border lines of civilization; and it was there, in the region where North Carolina and eastern Tennessee meet, that the years succeeding the Revolution appear mainly to have been passed. It was there also that he met and married his wife, Elizabeth Shine, a native of Dobbs County, North Carolina, where she was born on the 7th of June, 1765. At the time of their marriage the country where they lived was little more than a wilderness, still infested by Indians; and one of the earliest recollections of the future admiral was being sent into the loft, on the approach of a party of these, while his mother with an axe guarded the door, which she had barricaded. This unsettled and dangerous condition necessitated a constant state of preparedness, with some organization of the local militia, among whom George Farragut held the rank of a major of cavalry, in which capacity he served actively for some time.

While resident in Tennessee, George Farragut became known to Mr. W. C. C. Claiborne, at that time the member for Tennessee in the National House of Representatives. Mr. Claiborne in 1801 became governor of Mississippi Territory; and in 1803, when the United States purchased from France the great region west of the Mississippi River, to which the name Louisiana was then applied, he received the cession of the newly acquired possession. This was soon after divided into two parts by a line following the thirty-third parallel of north latitude, and Claiborne became governor of the southern division, which was called the Territory of Orleans. To this may probably be attributed the removal of the Farraguts to Louisiana from eastern Tennessee. The region in which the latter is situated, remote both from tide-water and from the great river by which the Western States found their way to the Gulf of Mexico, was singularly unfitted to progress under the conditions of communication in that day; and it long remained among the most backward and primitive portions of the United States. The admiral's father, after his long experience there, must have seen that there was little hope of bettering his fortunes. Whatever the cause, he moved to Louisiana in the early years of the century,

and settled his family in New Orleans. He himself received the appointment of sailing-master in the navy, and was ordered to command a gun-boat employed in the river and on the adjacent sounds. A dispute had arisen between the United States and the Spanish Government, to whom the Floridas then belonged, as to the line of demarcation between the two territories; and George Farragut was at times employed with his vessel in composing disturbances and forwarding the views of his own government.

David Glasgow, the second son of George Farragut, and the future Admiral of the United States Navy, was born before the removal to Louisiana, on the 5th of July, 1801, at Campbell's Station, near Knoxville, in eastern Tennessee. In 1808, while living in his father's house on the banks of Lake Pontchartrain, an incident occurred which led directly to his entrance into the navy, and at the same time brought into curious coincidence two families, not before closely associated, whose names are now among the most conspicuous of those in the annals of the navy. While George Farragut was fishing one day on Lake Pontchartrain he fell in with a boat, also engaged in fishing, in which was an old gentleman prostrated by the heat of the sun. He took him to his own house, where he was cared for and nursed until he died, never having recovered strength sufficient to be removed. The sufferer was David Porter, the father of the Captain David Porter who afterward commanded the frigate *Essex* in her adventurous and celebrated cruise in the Pacific during the years 1813 and 1814, and grandfather of the still more distinguished Admiral David D. Porter, who, over half a century later, served with David Farragut on the *Mississippi* in the civil war, and in the end succeeded him as second admiral of the navy. Captain, or rather, as he then was, Commander Porter being in charge of the naval station at New Orleans, his father, who had served actively afloat during the Revolution and had afterward been appointed by Washington a sailing-master in the navy, had obtained orders to the same station, in order to be with, though nominally under, his son. The latter deeply felt the kindness shown to his father by the Farraguts. Mrs. Farragut herself died of yellow fever, toward the end of Mr. Porter's illness, the funeral of the two taking place on the same day; and Commander Porter soon after visited the family at their home and offered to adopt one of the children. Young David Farragut then knew little of the element upon which his future life was to be passed; but, dazzled by the commander's uniform and by that of his own elder brother William, who had received a midshipman's warrant a short time before, he promptly decided to accept an offer which held forth to him the same brilliant prospects. The arrangement was soon concluded. Porter promised to be to him always a friend and guardian; and the admiral wrote in after life, "I am happy to have it in my power to say, with feelings of the warmest gratitude, that he ever was to me all that he promised." The boy returned to New Orleans with his new protector, in whose house he thenceforth resided, making occasional trips across Lake Pontchartrain to a plantation which his father had purchased on the Pascagoula River. A few months later Commander Porter appears to have made a visit to Washington on business connected with the New Orleans station, and to have taken Farragut with him to be placed at school, for which there were few advantages at that time in Louisiana. The boy then took what proved to be a last farewell of his father. George Farragut continued to live in Pascagoula, and there he died on the 4th of June, 1817, in his sixty-second year.

The trip north was made by Porter and his ward in the bomb-ketch *Vesuvius*, a stop being made at Havana; where the commander had business growing out of the seizure by him in the Mississippi River of some French privateers, for which both Spain and the United States had offered a reward. At Havana the lad heard of an incident, only too common in those days, which set his heart, as those of his countrymen were fast being set, against Great Britain. Presuming confidently upon the naval weakness of the United States, and arguing from their long forbearance that insults to the flag would be indefinitely borne for the sake of the profitable commerce which neutrality insured, Great Britain, in order to support the deadly struggle in which she was engaged with France, had endeavored to shut off the intercourse of her enemy with the rest of the world, by imposing upon neutral trade restrictions before unheard of and without justification in accepted international law. Both the justice and policy of these restrictions were contested by a large party of distinguished Englishmen; but upon another

principle men of all parties in the old country were practically agreed, and that was the right of the British Government to compel the services of British seamen wherever found. From this grew the claim, which few Englishmen then dared to disavow, that their ships of war could rightfully take from any neutral merchant ship any seaman of British birth who was found on board. In estimating this monstrous pretention, Americans have shown little willingness to allow for the desperate struggle in which Great Britain was involved, and the injury which she suffered from the number of her seamen who, to escape impressment in their home ports and the confinement of ships of war, sought service in neutral merchant ships. Her salvation depended upon her navy; and seamen were so scarce as seriously to injure its efficiency and threaten paralysis. This was naturally no concern of the United States, which set up its simple, undeniable right to the protection the neutral flag should give to all persons and goods under it, which were not involved in any infraction of belligerent rights. The straits of Great Britain, however, were too dire to allow the voice of justice to override that of expediency. Had the United States Navy been a force as respectable in numbers as it was in efficiency, the same dictates of expediency might have materially controlled the action of her opponent; might have prevented outrage and averted war. As it was, right was set up against right—the right of the neutral flag on the one hand against the right of a country to the service of all her citizens on the other. The United States protested and wrote with all the conviction of a state upon whose side justice was. She resorted to measure after measure of peaceable coercion; but she had no military force to show upon the sea, and her utterances were consequently too uncertain to command respect. Great Britain continued to take seamen from American merchant ships upon the plea of her right to impress British seamen in any place; and, though the claim to detain or search ships of war had been explicitly disavowed after the Chesapeake affair of 1807, scant deference was shown to the vessels of a power so little able to stand up for itself. In a day when most vessels carried some guns for self-defense, it was a simple matter to ignore the national character of an armed ship and to stop it unceremoniously. Of such an insult Farragut heard during this stay in Havana. The brig *Vixen*, of the United States Navy, had been fired into by a British ship of war. "This," wrote Farragut in his journal, "was the first thing that caused in me bad feeling toward the English nation. I was too young to know anything about the Revolution; but I looked upon this as an insult to be paid in kind, and was anxious to discharge the debt with interest." It is scarcely necessary to say how keenly this feeling was shared by his seniors in the service, to whom the *Vixen* incident was but one among many bitter wrongs which the policy of their Government had forced them humbly to swallow.

After their arrival in Washington Farragut was put to school, where he remained until Porter was relieved from the New Orleans station. During his stay at the capital he was presented by his guardian to the Secretary of the Navy, Paul Hamilton, of South Carolina; who, after ascertaining his wish to enter the service, promised him a midshipman's warrant when he should be ten years old. The promise was more than kept, for the warrant, when issued, was dated December 17, 1810; the future admiral thus finding himself at least a titular officer, in the service which he was afterward to adorn, when not quite nine and a half years of age. Although at that time, and in earlier generations, boys, no older than Farragut then was, were not infrequently turned aboard ship to fight their own way in life, Porter did not so construe his duties to his charge. In the latter part of 1810 he finally left New Orleans and went North again, this time by the Mississippi River and in a gun-boat. The voyage to Pittsburg against the swift current took three months; and it was not till toward the close of the year that he and his family were again settled in their home at Chester, in Pennsylvania, the birthplace of Mrs. Porter. Farragut was then removed from Washington and put to school in Chester, there to remain until his guardian should be able to take him to sea under his own eyes, in a vessel commanded by himself. This opportunity was not long in arriving.

## **CHAPTER II.**

### **CRUISE OF THE ESSEX.**

#### **1811-1814**

Child though Farragut was when he obtained his nominal admission to the navy, he had but a short time to wait before entering upon its stern realities—realities far harsher in that day than now. The difficulties that had existed between the United States and Great Britain, ever since the outbreak of war between the latter and France in 1793, were now fast drifting both nations to the collision of 1812. The Non-intercourse Act of March, 1809, forbidding American merchant ships to enter any port of France or Great Britain, as a retaliation for the outrages inflicted by both upon American commerce, had expired by its own limitations in May, 1810, when commerce with the two countries resumed its natural course; but Congress had then passed a proviso to the effect that if either power should, before March 3, 1811, recall its offensive measures, the former act should, within three months of such revocation, revive against the one that maintained its edicts. Napoleon had contrived to satisfy the United States Government that his celebrated Berlin and Milan decrees had been recalled on the 1st of November; and, consequently, non-intercourse with Great Britain was again proclaimed in February, 1811. The immediate result was that two British frigates took their station off New York, where they overhauled all merchant ships, capturing those bound to ports of the French Empire, and impressing any members of the crews considered to be British subjects. The United States then fitted out a squadron, to be commanded by Commodore John Rodgers; whose orders, dated May 6, 1811, were to cruise off the coast and to protect American commerce from unlawful interference by British and French cruisers. Ten days later occurred the collision between the commodore's ship, the *President*, and the British corvette *Little Belt*. Of Rodgers's squadron the frigate *Essex*, expected shortly to arrive from Europe, was to be one; and Commander Porter, who did not obtain his promotion to the grade of captain until the following year, was ordered to commission her. He took his ward with him, and the two joined the ship at Norfolk, Virginia, in August, 1811, when the young midshipman had just passed his tenth birthday. Long years afterward Mrs. Farragut was told by Commodore Bolton, one of the lieutenants of the *Essex*, that he remembered to have found the little boy overcome with sleep upon his watch, leaning against a gun-carriage, and had covered him with his pea-jacket to protect him from the night air. An amusing incident, however, which occurred during these first months of his naval career showed that the spirit of battle was already stirring. Porter, probably with a view to keep the lad more immediately under his own eye, had made him midshipman of his gig, as the captain's special boat is called. On one occasion he was sent in to the wharf, to wait for the captain and bring him to the ship when he came. A crowd of dock-loungers gradually collected, and the youngster who stood erect in the boat, doubtless looking pleasedly conscious of his new uniform and importance, became the object of audible comment upon his personal appearance. The boat's crew sat silent but chafing, the bowman holding on with his boat-hook, until one loafer proceeded from witticism to practical joking by sprinkling the midshipman with an old water-pot. Quick as look the bowman caught his boot-hook in the culprit's pocket and dragged him into the boat, while the rest of the crew, by this time spoiling for a fight, seized their stretchers, jumped ashore, and began laying on right and left. Farragut, so far from restraining, went with them, waving his dirk and cheering them on. The victorious seamen fought their way up to Market Square, where the police interfered, arresting all parties, and the little officer was formally bound over to keep the peace.

The *Hartford*, upon which Farragut first hoisted his admiral's flag, has obtained a particular interest from its close association with the whole of his course of victory; and the *Essex*, a ship of very different type, would attract attention as the one that cradled his career, and witnessed the part of it

which is only second in excitement to his exploits as a commander-in-chief, had she no special claims of her own to notice. But the Essex, both in her origin and through her subsequent history, especially when under Porter's command, was a marked ship. She was an offspring of the quarrel between the United States and the French Republic, which arose out of the extravagant demands made by the latter upon the compliance of her former ally, in consequence of the service which it was claimed had been rendered during the Revolutionary War. Ignoring the weakness of the American Republic, and the dependence of a large section of the country upon commerce, the French Government had expected that it should resist, even by force, the seizure by British cruisers of French property in American vessels, and thus bring on hostilities with Great Britain; and that, although the United States Government admitted the practice of capturing enemy's property in neutral ships, however objectionable in theory, to be part of the traditional and recognized law of nations. Going on from step to step, in the vain endeavor by some means to injure the maritime predominance of Great Britain, which defied the efforts both of their navy and of their privateers, the French Legislature in January, 1798, decreed that any neutral vessel which should be found to have on board, not merely British property, but property, to whomsoever belonging, which was grown or manufactured in England or her colonies, should be a lawful prize to French cruisers. This extravagant claim, which not only seized goods that had been heretofore and by all others accounted free, but also, contrary to precedent, confiscated the vessel as well as the cargo, broke down the patience of the United States, where the Government was then still in the hands of the Federalists, whose sympathies were rather British than French. Nearly a year before, President Adams had called a special meeting of Congress and recommended an increase of the navy, to the numerical weakness of which was due the recklessness with which both Great Britain and France inflicted insult and injury upon our seamen and upon our commerce. That the United States of that day, so inferior in wealth and numbers to both belligerents, should dream of entering the lists with either singly, was perhaps hopeless; but through the indifference of Congress the navy of a people, then second only to the English as maritime carriers, was left so utterly impotent that it counted for naught, even as an additional embarrassment to those with which the contending powers were already weighted. When, therefore, in retaliation for the seizures made under the French decree of January, 1798, Congress, without declaring war, directed the capture of French armed vessels, wherever found on the high seas, it became necessary to begin building a navy which to some slight degree might carry out the order. An act, intended to hasten the increase of the navy, was passed in June, 1798, authorizing the President to accept such vessels as might be built by the citizens for the national service, and to issue six-per-cent stock to indemnify the subscribers.

Under this law the Essex was built in Salem, Massachusetts, by a subscription raised among the citizens. As the project grew, and the amount likely to be obtained became manifest, the purpose to which it should be devoted was determined to be the building of a frigate of thirty-two guns; one of the well-recognized, but smaller, classes under which the vessels called frigates were subdivided. Except the work of the naval architect proper, the model and the superintendence, which were undertaken by a gentleman from Portsmouth, everything in the building and equipment was portioned out among Salem men, and was supplied from the resources of the town or of the surrounding country. During the winter of 1798 to 1799 the sleds of all the farmers in the neighborhood were employed bringing in the timber for the frames and planking of the new ship. The rigging was manufactured by the three ropewalks then in the place, each undertaking one mast; and the sails were of cloth so carefully selected and so admirably cut that it was noticed the frigate never again sailed so well as with this first suit. When the rope cables, which alone were then used by ships instead of the chains of the present day, were completed, the workmen took them upon their shoulders and marched with them in procession to the vessel, headed by a drum and fife. The building of the Essex was thus an effort of city pride and local patriotism; and the launch, which took place on the 30th of September, 1799, became an occasion of general rejoicing and holiday, witnessed by thousands of spectators and greeted by

salutes from the battery and shipping. The new frigate measured 850 tons, and cost, independent of guns and stores, somewhat over \$75,000. Her battery in her early history was composed of twenty-six long twelve-pounders on the main deck, with sixteen thirty-two-pound carronades and two chase guns on the deck above. At a later day, and during the cruise under Porter, this was changed to forty thirty-two-pound carronades and six long twelves. This battery, though throwing a heavier weight, was of shorter range than the former; and therefore, though advantageous to a ship able to choose her position, was a fatal source of weakness to a slow or crippled vessel, as was painfully apparent in the action where the Essex was lost.

Notwithstanding the zeal and emulation aroused by the appeal to Salem municipal pride, and notwithstanding the comparative rapidity with which ships could then be built, the Essex in her day illustrated the folly of deferring preparation until hostilities are at hand. The first French prize was taken in June, 1798, but it was not till December 22d of the following year that the Essex sailed out of Salem harbor, commanded then by Edward Preble, one of the most distinguished officers of the early American navy. Newport was her first port of arrival. From there she sailed again on the 6th of January, 1800, in company with the frigate Congress, both being bound for Batavia, whence they were to convoy home a fleet of merchant ships; for in the predatory warfare encouraged by the French Directory, the protection of our commerce from its cruisers was a duty even more important than the retaliatory action against the latter, to which the *quasi* war of 1798 was confined. When six days out, the Congress was dismasted. The Essex went on alone, and was thus the first ship-of-war to carry the flag of the United States around the Cape of Good Hope into the Indian Ocean. A dozen years later the bold resolution of Porter to take her alone and unsupported into the Pacific, during the cruise upon which young Farragut was now embarking, secured for this little frigate the singular distinction of being the first United States ship-of-war to double Cape Horn as well as that of Good Hope. In the intervening period the Essex had been usefully, but not conspicuously, employed in the Mediterranean in the operations against Tripoli and in protecting trade. In 1811, however, she was again an actor in an event of solemn significance. Upon her return to the United States, where Porter was waiting to take command, she bore as a passenger William Pinkney, the late Minister to Great Britain; who, after years of struggle, on his part both resolute and dignified, to obtain the just demands of the United States, had now formally broken off the diplomatic relations between the two powers and taken an unfriendly leave of the British Government.

Being just returned from a foreign cruise, the Essex needed a certain amount of refitting before again going to sea under her new commander; but in October, 1811, she sailed for a short cruise on the coast, in furtherance of the Government's orders to Commodore Rodgers to protect American commerce from improper interference. Orders of such a character were likely at any moment to result in a collision, especially in the hands of a gallant, hasty officer scarcely out of his first youth; for Porter was at this time but thirty-one, and for years had felt, with the keen resentment of a military man, the passive submission to insult shown by Jefferson's government. No meeting, however, occurred; nor were the months that elapsed before the outbreak of war marked by any event of special interest except a narrow escape from shipwreck on Christmas eve, when the Essex nearly dragged on shore in a furious northeast gale under the cliffs at Newport. Farragut has left on record in his journal, with the proper pride of a midshipman in his ship, that the Essex was the smartest vessel in the squadron, and highly complimented as such by Commodore Rodgers. In acknowledgment of the skill and activity of his seamen, Porter divided the ship's company into three watches, instead of the usual two—an arrangement only possible when the smaller number in a watch is compensated by their greater individual efficiency. This arrangement continued throughout the cruise, until the ship was captured in 1814.

On the 18th of June, 1812, war was at last declared against Great Britain. The Essex had again been cruising during the spring months; but the serious character of the new duties before her made a thorough refit necessary, and she was not able to sail with the squadron under Commodore

Rodgers, which put to sea from New York on the 21st of June. On the 3d of July, however, she got away, Porter having the day before received his promotion to post-captain, then the highest grade in the United States Navy. The ship cruised off the coast, making several prizes of vessels much inferior to herself in force, and on the 7th of September anchored within the capes of the Delaware. Much to Porter's surprise and annoyance, although ready to sail at once if furnished with provisions, none reached him. The ship was therefore taken up the Delaware and anchored off Chester, where she was prepared for a long and distant cruise directed against British commerce, the suggestion of which Porter believed came first from himself. By this a squadron consisting of the Constitution, Essex, and Hornet sloop-of-war, under the command of Commodore Bainbridge in the first-named frigate, were to proceed across the Atlantic to the Cape Verde Islands, thence to the South Atlantic in the neighborhood of Brazil, and finally to the Pacific, to destroy the British whale-fishery there. The plan was well conceived, and particularly was stamped with the essential mark of all successful commerce-destroying, the evasion of the enemy's cruisers; for, though the American cruisers were primed to fight, yet an action, even if successful, tended to cripple their powers of pursuit. A rapid transit through the Atlantic, with an ultimate destination to the then little-frequented Pacific, was admirably calculated to conceal for a long time the purposes of this commerce-destroying squadron. As it happened, both the Constitution and Hornet met and captured enemy's cruisers off the coast of Brazil, and then returned to the United States. Farragut thus lost the opportunity of sharing in any of the victories of 1812, to be a partaker in one of the most glorious of defeats.

The Constitution and Hornet being in Boston, and the Essex in the Delaware, it became necessary to appoint for the three a distant place of meeting, out of the usual cruising grounds of the enemy, in order that the ships, whose first object was to escape crippling, could pass rapidly through the belt of British cruisers then girding the coast of the United States. The brilliant record made by United States ships in their single combats with the enemy during this war should not be allowed to blind our people to the fact that, from their numerical inferiority, they were practically prisoners in their own ports; and, like other prisoners, had to break jail to gain freedom to act. The distant and little frequented Cape Verde group, off the African coast, was therefore designated as the first rendezvous for Bainbridge's squadron, and the lonely island of Fernando Noronha, off the coast of Brazil, close under the equator, as the second. Both of these places were then possessions of Portugal, the ally of Great Britain though neutral as to the United States. With these orders the Constitution and Hornet sailed from Boston on the 26th of October, 1812, and the Essex two days later from the capes of the Delaware. Their course in the passage was to be so directed as to cross at the most favorable points the routes of British commerce.

On the 27th of November the Essex, after an uneventful voyage, anchored at Porto Praya, in the Cape Verdes, where she remained five days. Receiving no news of Bainbridge, Porter sailed again for Fernando Noronha. On the 11th of December a British packet, the Nocton, was captured, and from her was taken \$55,000 in specie—an acquisition which contributed much to facilitate the distant cruise contemplated by Porter. Four days later the Essex was off Fernando Noronha, and sent a boat ashore, which returned with a letter addressed ostensibly to Sir James Yeo, of the British frigate Southampton; but between the lines, written in sympathetic ink, Porter found a message from Bainbridge, directing him to cruise off Rio and wait for the Constitution. On the 29th of December he was in the prescribed station, and cruised in the neighborhood for some days, although he knew a British ship-of-the-line, the Montagu, was lying in Rio; but only one British prize was taken, the merchant vessels of that nation usually waiting in port until they could sail under convoy of a ship-of-war. Attempting to get to windward in a heavy sea, the Essex was much racked and injured some of her spars, and her captain therefore decided to bear away for refit to St. Catherine's—a port five hundred miles south of Rio Janeiro, which had been named in his instructions as a contingent rendezvous. On the 20th of January, 1813, the Essex anchored there, and began the work of refitting and filling with water and fresh provisions. A few days after her arrival a small Portuguese vessel came in, bringing

an account of the capture by the *Montagu* of an American corvette, which Porter supposed to be the *Hornet*, as well as a rumor of the action between the *Constitution* and the *Java*, and a report that reinforcements were reaching the British naval force on the station. The history of past wars convinced Porter that the neutrality of the Portuguese port in which he was lying would not be respected by the enemy. In a very few days his presence there must become known; any junction with his consorts was rendered most unlikely by the news just received, and he determined at once to undertake alone the mission for which the three ships had been dispatched. With admirable promptitude, both of decision and action, the *Essex* sailed the same night for the Pacific.

From the time of leaving the United States the crew of the ship had been restricted to that close and economical allowance of provisions and water which was necessary to a vessel whose home ports were blocked by enemy's cruisers, and which in every quarter of the globe might expect to meet the fleets and influence of a powerful foe. The passage round Cape Horn, always stormy, was both a long and severe strain to a vessel bound from east to west, and dependent wholly upon sail; for the winds prevail from the westward. The utmost prudence was required in portioning out both food and water, and of bread there remained, on leaving St. Catherine's, only enough for three months at half allowance—that is, at half a pound per day. The boy Farragut thus found himself, at the outset of his career, exposed to one of the severest tests of his arduous calling—a long and stormy passage, made in the teeth of violent gales, and with a crew reduced to the scantiest possible allowance of food, under conditions when the system most demands support. In his journal he speaks, as Porter does in his, of the severe suffering and dreadful weather experienced. For twenty-one days the *Essex* struggled with the furious blasts, the heavy seas, and the bitter weather, which have made the passage round Cape Horn proverbial for hardship among seamen. On the 3d of March, he writes, a sea was shipped which burst in, on one side of the ship and from one end to the other, all the ports through which the guns are fired, and which, for such a passage, are closed and securely fastened. One boat on the weather side was driven in on deck, and that on the opposite carried overboard; but with great difficulty the latter was saved. Large quantities of water rushed below, leading those there to imagine that the ship was sinking. "This was the only instance in which I ever saw a real good seaman paralyzed by fear at the dangers of the sea. Several of the sailors were seen on their knees at prayer; but most were found ready to do their duty. They were called on deck, and came promptly, led by William Kingsbury, the boatswain's mate. Long shall I remember the cheering sound of his stentorian voice, which resembled the roaring of a lion rather than that of a human being, when he told them: 'D—n their eyes, to put their best foot forward, as there was one side of the ship left yet.'"

Cape Horn, however, was at last passed and enough ground gained to the westward to allow the *Essex* again to head north. On the 11th of March she was off the city of Valparaiso, in Chile. As far as Porter then knew, Chile was still a province of Spain, and Spain was the ally of Great Britain; whose armies for four years past had been engaged in war in the Peninsula, to shake from it the grip of Napoleon. There had been trouble also between Spain and the United States about the Floridas. The first lieutenant of the *Essex* was therefore first sent ashore to see what reception would be given, and returned with the satisfactory intelligence that Chile was in revolution against the mother country, and was ready heartily to welcome a ship-of-war belonging to the American Republic. He also brought the news that the Viceroy of Spain in Peru had fitted out privateers against Chilean commerce; and that these, on the plea of being allies of Great Britain, had begun to capture American whalers. It seemed, therefore, that the *Essex* had arrived as opportunely for the protection of United States interests as for the injury of British commerce.

Several days were lost in these preliminaries, so that it was not till the 15th that the anchor was dropped in Valparaiso. Despite the cordial reception given, Porter was in haste to reach his scene of action in the North and sailed again on the 22d. Four days later he met a Peruvian privateer, the *Nereyda*, the captain of which was deceived by the *Essex* hoisting British colors. Coming on board the frigate, he stated freely that the Spaniards considered themselves the allies of Great Britain, that

he was himself cruising for American whalers, and had on board at the moment the crews of two of these which he had taken. Having extracted all the information he wanted, Porter undeceived the privateersman, took possession of the ship, threw overboard her guns and ammunition, and then released her, with a letter to the Viceroy; which, backed by the presence of the Essex, was calculated to insure peaceable treatment to American vessels.

There were at this time on the coast of Peru and in the neighboring waters twenty-three American whalers, worth, with their cargoes, two and a half million dollars, and mostly unarmed, having left home in a time of peace. Of English ships there were twenty; but, their country having been long at war, these were generally armed, and in many cases provided with letters of marque authorizing them to act as privateers and capture vessels hostile to their Crown. In this state of things, so unpromising for American interests, the arrival of the Essex entirely turned the scales, besides stopping the Spanish depredations which had but just begun.

On the 27th of March, off the harbor of Callao, the port of Lima, Porter recaptured the Barclay, one of the American ships seized by the Nereyda; but, although the frigate again disguised her nationality by hoisting British colors, there was among the several vessels in the harbor only one that showed the same flag. With the Barclay in company, the Essex now stood away for the Galapagos Islands. These are a group situated just south of the equator and some five hundred miles from the South American coast. Uninhabited then, as for the most part they still are, they were in 1813 a favorite rendezvous for British whalers, who had established upon one of the islands (Charles) a means of communication by a box nailed to a tree, which was called the post-office. They abound in turtle, some of which weigh several hundred pounds, and form a very valuable as well as acceptable change of diet to seamen long confined to salt food. On the 17th of April the Essex came in sight of Chatham Island, one of the largest, and remained cruising in the neighborhood of the group till the beginning of June, when want of water compelled her to go to Tumbez, a port on the continent just abreast of the Galapagos. In this period seven British whalers were taken; so that on the 24th of June there were anchored in Tumbez Bay, including the frigate and the Barclay, nine vessels under Porter's command. Of these, he commissioned one—the fastest and best, somewhat less than half the size of the Essex herself—as a United States cruiser, under his command. She was named the Essex Junior, carried twenty guns, of which half were long six-pounders and half eighteen-pounder carronades, and was manned by sixty of the Essex's crew under her first lieutenant.

The first service of the Essex Junior was to convoy to Valparaiso the Barclay and four of the British prizes. The occasion was one of great importance and interest to Farragut; for, though but a boy of twelve, he was selected to command the party of seamen detailed to manage the Barclay during this long passage. The captain of the Barclay went with his ship, but in great discontent that the command of the seamen was given not to himself, but to such a lad from the ship-of-war. Being a violent-tempered old man, he attempted by bluster to overawe the boy into surrendering his authority. "When the day arrived for our separation from the squadron," writes Farragut in his journal, "the captain was furious, and very plainly intimated to me that I would 'find myself off New Zealand in the morning,' to which I most decidedly demurred. We were lying still, while the other ships were fast disappearing from view, the commodore going north and the Essex Junior, with her convoy, steering to the south for Valparaiso. I considered that my day of trial had arrived (for I was a little afraid of the old fellow, as every one else was). But the time had come for me at least to play the man; so I mustered up courage and informed the captain that I desired the maintopsail filled away, in order that we might close up with the Essex Junior. He replied that he would shoot any man who dared to touch a rope without his orders; he 'would go his own course, and had no idea of trusting himself with a d—d nutshell'; and then he went below for his pistols. I called my right-hand man of the crew and told him my situation. I also informed him that I wanted the maintopsail filled. He answered with a clear 'Ay, ay, sir!' in a manner which was not to be misunderstood, and my confidence was perfectly restored. From that moment I became master of the vessel, and immediately gave all necessary orders

for making sail, notifying the captain not to come on deck with his pistols unless he wished to go overboard, for I would really have had very little trouble in having such an order obeyed. I made my report to Captain Downes (of the Essex Junior), on rejoining him; and the captain also told his story, in which he endeavored to persuade Downes that he only tried to frighten me. I replied by requesting Captain Downes to ask him how he succeeded; and to show him that I did not fear him, I offered to go back and proceed with him to Valparaiso. He was informed that I was in command, he being simply my adviser in navigating the vessel in case of separation. So, this being settled and understood, I returned to the Barclay, and everything went on amicably up to our arrival in Valparaiso."

It was on the 30th of June that the little squadron sailed from Tumbes, standing to the westward till they should reach the trade-winds; and on the 4th of July that the Essex Junior separated, with the prizes, and Farragut had his scene with the captain of the Barclay. As the winds on the west coast of South America blow throughout the year from the southward, the passage of sailing vessels in that direction is always long; but for the same reason the return is quickly made. When, therefore, the Essex Junior rejoined the Essex at the Galapagos, on the 30th of September, she brought comparatively recent news, and that of a very important character. Letters from the American consul in Buenos Ayres informed Porter that on the 5th of July the British frigate *Phoebe*, of thirty-six guns, a vessel in every way of superior force to the Essex, had sailed from Rio Janeiro for the Pacific, accompanied by two sloops-of-war, the *Cherub* and *Raccoon*, of twenty-four guns each. This little squadron was charged with the double mission of checking the ravages of the Essex and of destroying the fur trade of American citizens at the mouth of the Columbia River. From the date of their leaving Rio these ships were not improbably now on the coast; and allowing for time to refit after the stormy passage round the Horn, they might be expected soon to seek Porter at the Galapagos, the headquarters of the British whalers.

The Essex Junior brought back the prize-crews and prize-masters who had navigated the captured ships to Valparaiso, and with the others Farragut now rejoined the frigate. During their absence Porter had taken four more valuable vessels. According to his information, there remained but one uncaptured of the British whalers which centered around the islands. The Essex had taken eleven; and among these, six carried letters of marque from their Government, authorizing them to seize for their own profit vessels of a nation at war with Great Britain. These powers would doubtless have been exercised at the expense of the unprepared American whalers but for the opportune appearance of the Essex, which had also released the vessels of her country from the ports to which, at the time of her arrival, they had been driven by Peruvian privateers. Porter's work in this region was therefore finished. He had entirely broken up an important branch of British commerce, inflicting damage estimated at nearly three million dollars; but the coming of an enemy's force considerably superior to his own, an event wholly beyond his control, reversed all the conditions and imposed upon him some new line of action. For this he was already prepared, and he took his decision with the promptitude characteristic of the man. The commander of the British squadron, Captain Hillyar, was personally well known to him, being an old acquaintance in the Mediterranean; and he doubtless realized from observation, as well as from his past record, that his enemy was not a man to throw away, through any carelessness or false feeling of chivalry, a single advantage conferred by his superior force. On the other hand, Porter himself was not one quietly to submit to superiority without an effort to regain the control which the chances of naval war might yet throw into his hands. He was determined to fight, if any fair chance offered; but to do so it was necessary to put his ship in the highest state of efficiency, which could only be done by leaving the spot where he was known to be, and, throwing the enemy off his scent, repairing to one where the necessary work could be performed in security. Two days after the arrival of the Essex Junior all the vessels sailed from the Galapagos Islands for the Marquesas. On the 25th of October they anchored at one of this group, called Nukahiva Island.

During the six weeks the Essex lay at this anchorage her crew bore a part in several expeditions on shore, designed to protect the natives in the neighborhood against hostile tribes in other parts of

the island. In this land fighting Farragut and his younger messmates were not allowed to share; but were, on the contrary, compelled to attend a school established on board of one of the prizes, with the ship's chaplain for school-master. They were, however, permitted out of school hours and after the day's work, which for the ship's company ended at 4 p. m., to ramble freely in the island among the natives; considerable liberty being allowed to all hands, who, during their year's absence from the United States, had had little opportunity to visit any inhabited places. Farragut here learned to swim, and the aptitude of the natives to the water seems to have impressed him more than their other peculiarities which have since then been so liberally described in books of travel. "It appears as natural," he wrote, "for these islanders to swim as to eat. I have often seen mothers take their little children, apparently not more than two years old, down to the sea on their backs, walk deliberately into deep water, and leave them to paddle for themselves. To my astonishment, the little creatures could swim like young ducks."

On the 9th of December, 1813, the Essex and Essex Junior sailed for Valparaiso with one of the prizes, leaving the others at the Marquesas. Nothing of interest occurred during the passage, but the crew were daily exercised at all the arms carried by the ship—with the cannon, the muskets, and the single-sticks. The latter are for training in the use of the broadsword or cutlass, the play with which would be too dangerous for ordinary drills. Porter had a strong disposition to resort to boarding and hand-to-hand fighting, believing that the very surprise of an attack by the weaker party would go far to compensate for the inequality of numbers. On more than one occasion already, in the presence of superior force, he had contemplated resorting to this desperate game; and to a ship the character of whose battery necessitated a close approach to the enemy, the power to throw on board, at a moment's notice, a body of thoroughly drilled and equipped swordsmen was unquestionably of the first importance. "I have never since been in a ship," said Farragut at a later day, "where the crew of the old Essex was represented, but that I found them to be the best swordsmen on board. They had been so thoroughly trained as boarders that every man was prepared for such an emergency, with his cutlass as sharp as a razor, a dirk made from a file by the ship's armorer, and a pistol." With a ship well refitted and with a crew thus perfectly drilled, Porter had done all that in him lay in the way of preparation for victory. If he did not win, he would at least deserve to do so. For Farragut it is interesting to notice that, in his tender youth and most impressible years, he had before him, both in his captain and in his ship, most admirable models. The former daring to recklessness, yet leaving nothing to chance; fearless of responsibility, but ever sagacious in its exercise; a rigid disciplinarian, who yet tempered rigor by a profound knowledge of and sympathy with the peculiarities of the men who were under him. The latter—the ship—became, as ships under strong captains tend to become, the embodiment of the commander's spirit. Thoroughly prepared and armed at all points, she was now advancing at the close of her career to an audacious encounter with a greatly superior force. Whether the enterprise was justifiable or not, at least nothing that care could do to insure success was left to chance or to favor. Porter might perhaps have quitted the Pacific in December, 1813, and, reaching the United States coast in the winter, have escaped the blockade which at that season was necessarily relaxed. By doing so he might have saved his ship; but the United States Navy would have lost one of the most brilliant pages in its history, and its future admiral one of the most glorious episodes in his own great career.

On the 12th of January, 1814, the Essex arrived off the coast of Chile, making the land well to the southward—that is, to windward—of Valparaiso. From this point of arrival she ran slowly to the northward, looking into the old town of Concepción, between two and three hundred miles from Valparaiso. In the latter port she anchored on the 3d of February. The ordinary salutes and civilities with the authorities having been exchanged, every effort was made to get the ship ready for sea, the Essex Junior being employed cruising off the port so as to give timely notice of the approach of an enemy; a precaution necessary at all times, even in a neutral port, but especially so at a period when neutral rights were being openly disregarded in every direction by both the great belligerents, France

and Great Britain. Moreover, Captain Hillyar, though a brave and experienced officer, a favorite with Nelson, whose esteem could not be won without high professional merit, was reputed to have shown scanty scruples about neutral rights on a previous occasion, when the disregard of them procured an advantage to the enterprise he had in hand. Being sent with several armed boats to attack two Spanish corvettes lying in the port of Barcelona, in the year 1800, he had pulled alongside a neutral vessel, a Swede, which was standing into the harbor; and after examining her papers in the due exercise of his right as a belligerent, his boats hooked on to her, thus using a neutral to tow them into the enemy's port, so that his men reached their scene of exertion unfatigued by the oar, and for a great part of the way protected by such respect as the Spanish batteries might show to a neutral coerced into aiding a hostile undertaking. "Having approached within about three quarters of a mile of the nearest battery," says the British naval historian James, "and being reminded by two shots which passed over the galliot that it was time to retire from the shelter of a neutral vessel, Captain Hillyar pulled away." Both the Spanish and Swedish Governments complained of this act, and their complaints delayed the promotion which Hillyar's gallantry would otherwise have won. Whatever the strict propriety of his conduct in this case, it was sufficiently doubtful to excite a just suspicion that Hillyar would not be deterred, by over-delicacy about the neutrality of the port, from seizing any advantage offered him by the unwariness of his enemy; and so the event proved.

On the 7th of February a dance was given on board the *Essex*, which lasted till midnight. In order that her officers might share in the entertainment, the *Essex Junior* was allowed to anchor, though in a position to have a clear view of the sea; but, when the guests began to depart, her commander went on board and got under way to resume his station outside. Before the decorations of the ball-room had been taken down, a signal was made from her that two enemy's ships were in sight. A whole watch—one third of the *Essex's* crew—were then on shore, but were quickly recalled by a gun. The ship was at once cleared for action, and the men at their quarters, with all the rapidity to be expected from the careful drilling they had had during their long commission. Porter himself had gone to the lookout ship to reconnoitre the enemy. Upon his return he found the frigate all ready for battle, it being then just an hour and a half since the alarm was given. The *Essex Junior* was then anchored in a position to support the *Essex* should occasion arise.

The strangers were the *Phœbe* and the *Cherub*. The third British ship, the *Raccoon*, had gone north to the *Columbia*. As has before been said, Captain Hillyar was an old friend of Porter's. The two men had been thrown together in the Mediterranean, and the American had been a frequent visitor in the other's house at Gibraltar. On one occasion Hillyar's family had made a passage from Malta to Gibraltar in an American ship-of-war; for in those troubled times would-be voyagers had to avail themselves of such opportunities as offered, and the courtesy of a large armed ship was among the most favorable. It was natural, therefore, that, as the *Phœbe* stood into the harbor, Captain Hillyar should bring his ship, the wind allowing it, close to the *Essex* and hail the latter with a polite inquiry after Captain Porter's health; but it was going rather too far, under all the circumstances, not to be content with passing slowly under the *Essex's* stern, than which no more favorable position could be found for an exchange of civil words. Instead of so doing, the helm of the *Phœbe* was put down and the ship luffed up into the wind between the *Essex* and the *Essex Junior*, the latter lying now near the senior ship and on her starboard beam. Whether Hillyar counted upon his own seamanship to extricate his ship from the awkward position in which he had placed her, or whether, as the Americans believed, he intended to attack if circumstances favored, he soon saw that he had exposed himself to extreme peril. As the *Phœbe* lost her way she naturally fell off from the wind, her bows being swept round toward the *Essex*, while her stern was presented to the *Essex Junior*. Both her enemies had their guns trained on her; she could use none of hers. At the same time, in the act of falling off, she approached the *Essex*; and her jib-boom, projecting far beyond her bows, swept over the forecastle of the latter. Porter, who had been watching the whole proceeding with great distrust, had summoned his boarders as soon as the *Phœbe* luffed. The *Essex* at the moment was in a state of as absolute

preparation as is a musket at full cock trained on the mark, and with the marksman's eye ranging over the sights; every man at his post, every gun trained, matches burning, and boarders standing by. The position was one of extreme tension. The American captain had in his hand a chance such as in his most sanguine dreams he could scarcely have hoped. His guns, feeble at a distance, could tell with the greatest effect at such short range; and even if his enemy dropped an anchor, in the great depths of Valparaiso Bay he would not fetch up till far past the Essex. Until then he was for the moment helpless. Porter hailed that if the ships touched he should at once attack. Hillyar kept his presence of mind admirably at this critical juncture, replying in an indifferent manner that he had no intention of allowing the *Phœbe* to fall on board the *Essex*—an assurance that was well enough, and, coupled with his nonchalant manner, served the purpose of keeping Porter in doubt as to whether a breach of neutrality had been intended. But the British frigate was unquestionably in a position where a seaman should not have placed her unless he meant mischief. It is good luck, not good management, when a ship in the *Phœbe*'s position does not foul one in that of the *Essex*. While this was passing, Farragut was witness to a circumstance which shows by what a feather's weight scales are sometimes turned. Of all the watch that had been on shore when the enemy appeared, he says, one only, a mere boy, returned under the influence of liquor. "When the *Phœbe* was close alongside, and all hands at quarters, the powder-boys stationed with slow matches ready to discharge the guns, the boarders, cutlass in hand, standing by to board in the smoke, as was our custom at close quarters, the intoxicated youth saw, or imagined that he saw, through the port, some one on the *Phœbe* grinning at him. 'My fine fellow, I'll stop your making faces,' he exclaimed, and was just about to fire his gun, when Lieutenant McKnight saw the movement and with a blow sprawled him on the deck. Had that gun been fired, I am convinced that the *Phœbe* would have been ours." She probably would, for the *Essex* could have got in three broadsides of her twenty thirty-two-pounder carronades before the enemy could effectively reply, a beginning which would have reversed the odds between the two ships. Farragut fully shared the belief of all his shipmates that an attack was intended, in consequence of the information given to Captain Hillyar, as he was entering, by the boat of an English merchant ship in the port, that half the crew of the *Essex* was on shore. As the *Phœbe* luffed through between the two Americans a turn of her helm would have landed her on the bows of the *Essex*, if the latter had been caught at disadvantage. Instead of this, she was found fully prepared. The *Essex Junior* was also on the spot, while the *Cherub*, having drifted half a mile to leeward, could not have taken any part till the action was decided. Under these conditions, although their force was inferior, the advantage was with the Americans, whose ships were anchored and cleared, while the *Phœbe* still had her canvas spread and the anchoring to do, which is a troublesome operation in water so deep as that of Valparaiso Bay. If men's motives can be judged by their acts, Captain Hillyar afforded Porter full justification for opening fire. He extricated himself from a false position with consummate coolness; but his adversary, when taken later at disadvantage, had reason to regret the generosity with which he allowed him the benefit of the doubt as to his intentions to respect the neutrality of the port. As it was, when the two ships were almost touching, the Englishman threw his sails to the mast, and, backing clear of the *Essex*, anchored finally some distance astern.

The two British ships remained in port for a few days, during which their captains called upon Captain Porter on shore, where he was then living in the house of a gentleman named Blanco; and an amicable intercourse also grew up between the officers and crews of the two parties. Hillyar, however, told Porter frankly that he should not throw away the advantage given by his superior force, for the event of a naval action was ever uncertain, liable to be decided by the accidental loss of an important spar or rope; whereas, by keeping his two ships together, he thought he could effectually blockade the *Essex* and prevent her renewing her depredations upon British commerce until the arrival of other ships of war which were on their way. From this wary attitude Porter in vain tried to force his antagonist by varied provocations; but, although the exchange of official insults, verging closely at times upon personal imputations, caused bitterness to take the place of the first friendly courtesies,

Hillyar was too old an officer, and his reputation for courage too well known, to allow his hand to be thus forced.

After filling with provisions and refitting, the British ships left the anchorage and cruised off the approach to it, thus preventing the retreat of the *Essex* to the ocean, unless she could succeed in passing and then outsailing them. Valparaiso Bay is not an enclosed harbor, but simply a recess in the coast, which, running generally north and south, here turns abruptly to the eastward for two or three miles and then trends north again, leaving thus a concave beach facing the north. Along this beach lies the city of Valparaiso, stretching back and up on the hillsides, which rise to a height of twelve or fifteen hundred feet behind it. The prevailing winds along this coast being from the southward throughout the year, this formation gives an anchorage sheltered from them; but during the winter months of the southern hemisphere, from May to October, there are occasional northerly gales which endanger shipping, more from the heavy sea that rolls in than from the violence of the wind. In ordinary weather, at the season when the *Essex* was thus blockaded, the harbor is quiet through the night until the forenoon, when the southerly wind prevailing outside works its way in to the anchorage and blows freshly till after sundown. At times it descends in furious gusts down the ravines which cleave the hillsides, covering the city with clouds of dust and whirling sand and pebbles painfully in the faces of those who walk the streets.

On the 28th of March, 1814, such a blast descended upon the *Essex*, whose captain had by that time come to despair of forcing Hillyar to single combat. As the frigate straightened out her cables under the force of the wind, one of them broke, and the anchor of the other lost its hold upon the bottom. The *Essex* began to drift to sea, and it was apparent would by this accident be carried out of reach of the port. Porter therefore ordered the cable cut and made sail on the ship, intending now to escape. The British ships kept habitually close to the western point of the bay; so that in case of such an attempt by their enemy he would have to pass to leeward of them, giving them a fair wind to follow. As Porter stood out, however, he thought possible, by keeping close to the wind, to pass to windward, which, with the superior sailing qualities of the *Essex*, would force the *Phœbe* to separate from the *Cherub*, unless Hillyar supinely acquiesced in his escape—an inadmissible supposition. If successful, he might yet have the single action he desired, and under conditions which would enable him to choose his distance and so profit by the qualities of his carronades. The *Essex* therefore hugged the wind; but as she was thus passing the western point of the bay, under a press of sail, a violent squall came down from the highland above, bearing the vessel over on her side and carrying away the maintopmast, which fell into the sea, drowning several of the crew. The loss of so important a part of her sail power made escape to sea impossible, and the *Essex* tried to regain the port. The wind, however, was adverse to the attempt in her crippled condition, so that she was only able to reach the east side of the bay, where she anchored about three miles from the city, but within pistol-shot of the shore, before the enemy could overtake her. As the conventional neutral line extends three miles from the beach, the *Essex* was here clearly under the protection of Chilean neutrality. Hillyar himself, in his official report of the action, says she was "so near the shore as to preclude the possibility of passing ahead of her without risk to His Majesty's ships." He seems, however, to have satisfied his conscience by drawing a line between the neutrality of the port and the neutrality of the country. The *Essex* was, he implies, outside the former. "Not succeeding in gaining the limits of the port, she bore up and anchored near the shore, a few miles to leeward of it."<sup>1</sup> At all events, having his adversary at such serious disadvantage, he did not propose to imitate the weakness Porter had shown toward himself six weeks before.

The crucial feature in the approaching action was that the *Essex* was armed almost entirely with carronades, and her principal enemy with long guns. The carronade, now a wholly obsolete arm, was a short cannon, made extremely light in proportion to the weight of the ball thrown by it. The

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<sup>1</sup> Marshall's Naval Biography, article Hillyar, vol. iv, p. 861.

comparative lightness of metal in each piece allowed a greater number to be carried, but at the same time so weakened the gun as to compel the use of a small charge of powder, in consequence of which the ball moved slowly and had but short range. In compensation, within its range, it broke up the hull of an enemy's ship more completely than the smaller but swifter ball from a long gun of the same weight; for the same reason that a stone thrown by hand demolishes a pane of glass, while a pistol-bullet makes a small, clean hole. It was this smashing effect at close quarters which gave the carronade favor in the eyes of one generation of seamen; but by 1812 it was generally recognized that, unless a vessel was able to choose her own position, the short range of carronades might leave her helpless, and, even when she had the greater speed, an enemy with long guns might cripple her as she approached. Porter had begged to change his carronades for long guns when he joined the *Essex*. The request was refused, and the ship in this action had forty thirty-two-pounder carronades and six long twelve-pounders. The *Phœbe* had twenty-six long eighteen-pounders, one long twelve, and one long nine, besides eight carronades. The *Essex* being crippled and at anchor, Captain Hillyar, faithful, and most properly, to his principle of surrendering no advantage, chose his position beyond effective carronade range. The battle was therefore fought between the six long twelves of the *Essex* and the broadside of the *Phœbe*, consisting of thirteen long eighteens, one twelve, and one nine. Taking no account of the *Cherub*, the disparity of force is sufficiently obvious.

Although, from the assurances Hillyar had made to him in conversation, Porter had hoped that the neutrality of the port might be regarded, the manner in which the enemy's vessels approached his new anchorage gave serious reason to fear an attack. The ship was again got ready for action, and a spring put on the cable to enable the guns to be turned on the enemy in any position he might take. The desperateness of the situation was, however, manifest to all. "I well remember," wrote Farragut at a later day, "the feelings of awe produced in me by the approach of the hostile ships; even to my young mind it was perceptible in the faces of those around me, as clearly as possible, that our case was hopeless. It was equally apparent that all were ready to die at their guns rather than surrender; and such I believe to have been the determination of the crew, almost to a man." A crippled ship, armed with carronades, was indeed in a hopeless plight. At six minutes before four in the afternoon the attack began. The *Essex* riding to an anchor with a southerly wind, the *Cherub* took position on her starboard bow, or southwest from her; the *Phœbe* north, under her stern. Both British ships began fighting under sail, not being yet ready to anchor. The spring on the *Essex*'s cable being shot away, she was unable to turn her broadside as was wished; but the Americans ran out of the stern-ports three of their long guns, which were so well served as to cut away some of the most important of the *Phœbe*'s ropes and sails, and Hillyar for a moment feared his ship would be drifted out of action. The *Cherub* also was forced to leave her first position and join the *Phœbe*. The latter's damages being repaired, she regained her ground and anchored; both she and her consort placing themselves on the starboard quarter of the *Essex*, a position on which the American guns, neither from the stern nor the broadside, could be brought to bear unless by the springs on the cables. These, unfortunately, were three times shot away as soon as they had been placed. The first lieutenant of the *Phœbe*, a frank and gallant young Englishman, whose manly bearing had greatly attracted the officers of the *Essex*, is said to have remarked to his captain that it was no better than murder to go on killing men from such a position of safety, and to have urged him to close and make a more equal fight of it. Hillyar, so the story goes, replied that his reputation was established, and that as his orders were peremptory to capture the *Essex*, he was determined to take no risks. He might have added—probably did—that it was open to the Americans to save their lives by surrendering. The same view of the situation now impelled Porter, finding himself unable to give blow for blow, to try and close with his wary enemy. Only one light sail was left to him in condition for setting—the flying-jib. With it, the cable having been cut, the head of the *Essex* was turned toward the enemy; and, fanned along by the other sails hanging loose from the yards, she slowly approached her foes till her carronades at last could reach. The wary Englishman then slipped his cable and stood away till again out of range, when he resumed

the action, choosing always his own position, which he was well able to do from the comparatively manageable condition of his ship. Finding it impossible to get into action, Porter next attempted to run the Essex aground, where the crew could escape and the vessel be destroyed. She was headed for the beach and approached within musket-shot of it, when a flaw of wind from the land cruelly turned her away.

The engagement had lasted nearly two hours when this disappointment was encountered. As a last resort, Porter now ordered a hawser to be made fast to an anchor which was still left. This was let go in the hope that, the Essex being held by it where she was, the enemy might drift out of action and be unable to return when the wind fell with the approaching sunset. The hawser, however, parted, and with it the last hope of escape. Great numbers of the crew had already been killed and wounded by the relentless pounding the ship had received from her enemies, for whom, toward the end, the affair became little more than safe target practice, with a smooth sea. As yet no voice had been raised in favor of submission; but now entreaty was made to Porter to spare the lives of the remnant that was left, by ceasing a resistance which had become not only hopeless but passive, and which, however prolonged, could end only in the surrender of the ship. The latter had already been on fire several times, and was now alarmingly so, the flames rushing up the hatchways and being reported to be near the magazine. Porter then gave permission for such of the crew as wished, to swim ashore; the colors being still flying, they were not yet prisoners of war. He next called his officers together to inform him as to the condition of the ship in the different parts where they served, but one only of the lieutenants was able to answer the summons. After consultation with him, satisfied that nothing more remained to be done, the order was given at twenty minutes past six to lower the flag of the Essex, after an action which had lasted two hours and a half. She had gone into battle with two hundred and fifty-five men. Of these, fifty-eight were killed, sixty-six wounded, and thirty-one missing. The last item is unusually large for a naval action, and was probably due to the attempt to escape to shore by swimming.

Farragut lacked still three months of being thirteen years old when he passed through this tremendous ordeal of slaughter, the most prolonged and the bloodiest of his distinguished career. At his tender years and in his subordinate position there could be, of course, no demand upon the professional ability or the moral courage which grapples with responsibility, of which he gave such high proof in his later life. In the Essex fight his was but to do and dare, perhaps it may rather be said to do and bear; for no heavier strain can be laid upon the physical courage than is required by passive endurance of a deadly attack without the power of reply. In the celebrated charge of the Six Hundred at Balaklava the magnificent display of courage was at least aided by the opportunity allowed for vehement action; the extreme nervous tension excited by such deadly danger found an outlet in the mad impetus of the forward rush. Farragut has himself recorded a singular instance in the Essex fight, which illustrates the sufficiently well-known fact that in the excitement of approaching action the sense of danger is subdued, even in a man who has not the strong nerves that endure the passive expectation of death. "On one occasion Midshipman Isaacs came up to the captain and reported that a quarter-gunner named Roach had deserted his post. The only reply of the captain, addressed to me, was: 'Do your duty, sir!' I seized a pistol and went in pursuit of the fellow, but did not find him. It appeared subsequently that when the ship was reported to be on fire he had contrived to get into the only boat that could be kept afloat, and escaped, with six others, to the shore. The most remarkable part of this affair was that Roach had always been a leading man in the ship, and on the occasion previously mentioned, when the *Phœbe* seemed about to run into us in the harbor of Valparaiso and the boarders were called away, I distinctly remember this man standing in an exposed position on the cat-head, with sleeves rolled up and cutlass in hand, ready to board, his countenance expressing eagerness for the fight; which goes to prove that personal courage is a very peculiar virtue."

Of his own courage the boy, in this his first action, gave the most marked proof. He was constantly under the captain's eye, and conducted himself so entirely to the satisfaction of that gallant

officer as to be mentioned particularly in the dispatches. "Midshipmen Isaacs, Farragut, and Ogden exerted themselves in the performance of their respective duties, and gave an earnest of their value to the service." "They are too young," Porter added, "to recommend for promotion"—a phrase which Farragut thought had an ill-effect on his career, but which certainly implied that his conduct merited a reward that his years did not justify. During the action he was employed in the most multifarious ways, realizing the saying that whatever is nobody else's business is a midshipman's business; or, to use his own quaint expression, "I was like 'Paddy in the catharpins'—a man on occasions. I performed the duties of captain's aid, quarter-gunner, powder-boy, and, in fact, did everything that was required of me. I shall never forget the horrid impression made upon me at the sight of the first man I had ever seen killed. He was a boatswain's mate and was fearfully mutilated. It staggered and sickened me at first; but they soon began to fall around me so fast that it all appeared like a dream and produced no effect upon my nerves. I can remember well, while I was standing near the captain just abaft of the mainmast, a shot came through the waterways and glanced upward, killing four men who were standing by the side of the gun, taking the last one in the head and scattering his brains over both of us. But this awful sight did not affect me half as much as the death of the first poor fellow. I neither thought of nor noticed anything but the working of the guns.... When my services were not required for other purposes, I generally assisted in working a gun; would run and bring powder from the boys and send them back for more, until the captain wanted me to carry a message; and this continued to employ me during the action."

Although included in the report of the slightly wounded, Farragut received no serious injury, but he was not without the narrow escapes which must have been undergone by all the survivors of so desperate an action. One has just been related; and he has himself recorded two other incidents which came near making an end of him. "An old quartermaster named Francis Bland was standing at the wheel when I saw a shot coming over the fore yard in such a direction that I thought it would strike him or me; so I told him to jump, at the same time pulling him toward me. At that instant the shot took off his right leg, and I afterward found that my coat-tail had been carried away. I helped the old fellow below, and inquired for him after the action, but he had died before he could be attended to." At another time "some gun-primers were wanted and I was sent after them. In going below, while I was on the ward-room ladder, the captain of the gun directly opposite the hatchway was struck full in the face by an eighteen-pound shot and fell back on me; we tumbled down the hatch together. I struck on my head, and, fortunately, he fell on my hips. I say fortunately, for, as he was a man of at least two hundred pounds' weight, I would have been crushed to death if he had fallen directly across my body. I lay for some moments stunned by the blow, but soon recovered consciousness enough to rush on deck. The captain, seeing me covered with blood, asked if I were wounded, to which I replied: 'I believe not, sir.' 'Then,' said he, 'where are the primers?' This brought me completely to my senses, and I ran below and carried the primers on deck. When I came up the second time I saw the captain fall, and in my turn ran up and asked if he were wounded. He answered me almost in the same words: 'I believe not, my son; but I felt a blow on the top of my head.' He must have been knocked down by the wind of a passing shot, as his hat was somewhat damaged." The bruises from this fall down the hatch were the only injuries Farragut received.

When the surrender was determined, Farragut, at the captain's order, dropped the signal book overboard, watching it as it sank in the water till out of sight; and then in company with another midshipman amused himself throwing overboard the pistols and other small arms, to keep them out of the enemy's hands. The following morning he went on board the *Phœbe*, where the mortification of defeat drew tears from his eyes; a state of dejection from which he was roused by seeing a pet pig belonging to the *Essex* in the custody of one of the *Phœbe*'s midshipmen. Farragut at once set up a claim to the porker as being private property, and as such to be respected by all civilized nations. The claim was resisted by the new owner; but his messmates, always ready for a lark, insisted that so doubtful a question must be decided by trial of battle. A ring being formed, Farragut, after a short

contest, succeeded in thrashing his opponent and regaining the pig, and with it a certain amount of complacency in that one Briton at least had felt the pangs of defeat. His grief mastered him again soon afterward, when asked by Captain Hillyar to breakfast with himself and Captain Porter. Hillyar, seeing his discomfiture, spoke to him with great kindness, saying: "Never mind, my little fellow, it will be your turn next perhaps"; to which, says Farragut, "I replied I hoped so, and left the cabin to hide my emotion."

After the action Porter and Hillyar entered into an arrangement by which the Essex Junior was disarmed and allowed to proceed to the United States as a cartel, under the charge of Lieutenant Downes, who had commanded her while a United States cruiser. All the survivors of the Essex except two, whose wounds did not permit, embarked in her and sailed from Valparaiso on the 27th of April for the United States, arriving on the 7th of July in New York. On the 5th, off the coast of Long Island, she was stopped by a British ship-of-war, whose captain questioned the right of Hillyar to give her the passports she carried, and indicated an intention of detaining her. Porter construed this violation of the stipulation between himself and his captor as releasing him from his obligations, and escaped to shore with a boat's crew. After a detention of nearly twenty-four hours the vessel was allowed to proceed; but was again overhauled by another British frigate as she approached Sandy Hook. There could be no serious question of detaining a ship that had been given a safeguard, under such circumstances and with such deliberation, by so experienced an officer as Hillyar. But it is instructive to Americans, who are accustomed to see in the war of 1812 only a brilliant series of naval victories, to note that within a few hours' sail of their principal port British cruisers were lying in perfect security, stopping whom they would.

The Essex, upon which Farragut made his maiden cruise, and whose interesting career ended in so sad a catastrophe, remained, of course, in the hands of the victors. The little frigate was patched up and taken to England, where she was bought into the British Navy, and was borne on its register until 1837, when she was sold. After that all trace of her history is lost.

The Essex Junior, being a prize to the Essex and allowed to pass under Hillyar's safeguard, was sold in New York for the benefit of the captors.

Note.—The spelling Chile (instead of Chili) used in this chapter is that adopted by the United States Board on Geographic Names, appointed by President Harrison, September 4, 1890, to settle a uniform usage for the Executive Departments of the Government.

## **CHAPTER III.**

### **MIDSHIPMAN TO LIEUTENANT.**

#### **1814-1825**

In common with the other survivors of the *Essex*, Farragut landed in the United States as a paroled prisoner of war. Captain Porter took him at once to Chester and put him again to school, this time to an old gentleman named Neif, who had served in the guards of Napoleon. The method of instruction practiced by him seems to have been unsystematic and discursive; but Farragut, who was ever attentive to make the most of such opportunities as offered for self-improvement, derived profit here also, and said afterward that the time thus passed had been of service to him throughout his life. Until very lately there were residents of that neighborhood who could recall the young midshipman as he was at Neif's school; a lad short of stature and not very handsome in face, but who bore himself very erect because, as he often declared, he could not afford to lose a fraction of one of his scanty inches. There was, and still is, near the spot where he went to school a tavern called the Seven Stars, which has been a public house since the time of the Revolution, and which had sheltered Howe and Cornwallis as the British army advanced from the head of the Chesapeake toward Philadelphia, in 1777. Upon its porch Farragut spent much of his leisure time, and within its walls joined in the social gayeties of the neighboring families, who afterward recalled with pride and interest this association with the young sailor before whom lay such a brilliant but unforeseen future.

In November, 1814, Farragut was exchanged, and at once ordered to New York to join the brig *Spark*, which was intended to form one of a squadron of small vessels to cruise against British commerce under the command of Captain Porter. He was here for the first time separated from his guardian and thrown wholly upon his own force of character to guide his steps; and this beginning was made with a set of messmates with whom he was temporarily quartered on board the *John Adams*, among whom were several very wild young men. Farragut evidently felt the force of the temptation, for he speaks with warm thankfulness of the counter-influence of the first lieutenant, to which he attributed much of his deliverance from the dissipation by which he was surrounded. "When I have looked back with a feeling of horror to that period of my life," he wrote, "I have always remembered with gratitude Mr. Cocke's counsels and kind-hearted forbearance." It was indeed characteristic of the man that, while by no means insensible to the natural temptations of youth, he was ever more attracted to and influenced by the good than by the evil around him. During the following year, on his cruise to the Mediterranean, he was messmate with a midshipman named William Taylor, a young man of singularly fine character, which seems to have been the chief cause of the influence he exerted upon Farragut. "He took me under his charge, counseled me kindly, and inspired me with sentiments of true manliness, which were the reverse of what I might have learned from the examples I saw in the steerage of the *John Adams*. Never having had any real love for dissipation, I easily got rid of the bad influences which had assailed me in that ship." He noted also that, of the twelve or thirteen midshipmen there associated with him, in less than two years all but one, his old messmate Ogden, of the *Essex*, had disappeared from the navy. The habit of strict attention to duty which he had contracted under the rule of the *Essex* also contributed, by keeping him occupied and attentive, to deter him from yielding to practices incompatible with its due discharge.

The conclusion of peace put an end to the proposed cruise of the *Spark*, and Farragut was next ordered, in March, 1815, to the *Independence*, a seventy-four-gun ship, or ship-of-the-line, as such were commonly called. She was the flag-ship of a numerous squadron, composed mostly of small vessels, destined to act against Algiers, with whom war had recently been declared. Upon arriving in the Mediterranean it was found that Commodore Decatur had already brought the Dey to terms, so that Farragut saw here no more fighting, and the squadron returned home by winter. The following

spring he was ordered to the *Washington*, also a seventy-four, about to sail for Naples, bearing on board Mr. William Pinkney, our minister to that court. This cruise gave our young midshipman an experience of a kind he had not before had, and which in more ways than one was useful to him. The *Washington* was one of those exceptional vessels which illustrated in the highest degree the kind and pitch of perfection to which, by unrelenting severity and exaction, the appearance and drills of a ship-of-war could be brought. Her commander, Captain Creighton, had the reputation of being the greatest martinet in the navy; and being seconded by a singularly efficient and active set of officers, the ship was made to realize the extreme ideal of a naval officer of that day in smartness, order, and spotless cleanliness.<sup>2</sup> "But," says Farragut, "all this was accomplished at the sacrifice of the comfort of every one on board. My experience in the matter, instead of making me a proselyte to the doctrine of the old officers on this subject, determined me never to have 'a crack ship' if it was only to be attained by such means." His feeling on the matter was doubtless somewhat quickened by the personal discomfort which he, in common with all subordinates, underwent under such a system, although he was rather a favorite with the captain, whose aid he was; but it shows independence of character to have thought so clearly for himself at such an age, and to have ventured to differ from standards which were then, and for a long time afterward, implicitly accepted throughout the service. The tradition of those days, being mainly oral, has nearly disappeared; but fragments of it remain here and there in the minds of those who, as youngsters thirty or forty years ago, were brought in contact with men, then already elderly, who had had personal experience of ships like the *Washington*. These stories, in their grotesque severities, have almost the air of an extravaganza. It must, however, be in justice remembered that they were the extravagances of a few among the men who had brought the United States Navy to the high efficiency in which it then was; and to whom, and not to either the people or the Government of that day, was due the glorious record of 1812. A few of them added to their military ardor and efficiency an undue amount of that spirit of the good housekeeper which makes a home unbearable. Farragut was aided to his wise conclusion by his previous experience in the *Essex*, where a high state of efficiency was gained without wanton sacrifice of comfort; for Porter, though a man of hasty temper, was ever considerate of his crew. But for the naval officers of that day Farragut throughout his life retained a profound admiration. Talking about them at his dinner-table in New Orleans fifty years later, but a few days before his famous passage of the Mobile forts, he said: "We have no better seamen in the service to-day than those gallant fellows Bainbridge, Decatur, Hull, Perry, Porter, and Charles Stewart; and," he added, "I must not forget to mention McDonough, and poor unlucky Lawrence, as splendid-looking a sailor as I ever saw. If I only had their chance and could lay the *Hartford* alongside of an English ship, I should like it better than fighting our own people." Some years later he again expressed the same feelings to the same friend, to whom the author is indebted for the communication of them. His own glorious career was then finished, and his life's work lay open to the mature reflection of his declining years, when he thus acknowledged his obligations to the heroes of his boyhood. "Isaac Hull," he said, "was as good a seaman as ever sailed a ship. If I have done the country any service afloat, it is in no small degree owing to the ambition and enthusiasm he created in me, when I was a youngster, by his fair fight with and capture of an English frigate. I always envied Hull that piece of good work." It is to be suspected that the Admiral always felt that something was lacking to the fullness of his cup, in that he had only been allowed to fight forts, and not ships like his own; and it is no small evidence of the generosity of his character that his enthusiasm was so aroused by the deeds of others. He spoke of the fight between the *Kearsarge* and the *Alabama* in as glowing terms as were aroused by his recollection of the *Constitution* and the *Guerrière*. "I had sooner have fought that fight," he wrote, "than any ever fought upon the ocean."

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<sup>2</sup> The writer remembers to have heard in his early days in the service a tradition of a ship commanded by Creighton, which he believes to have been the *Washington*, and which illustrates the methods by which this extreme smartness was obtained. In each boat at the booms was constantly a midshipman in full dress, cocked hat included, so that no time might be lost in dropping alongside when called away. The full crew was probably also kept in her.

The Washington stopped a few days at Gibraltar, where the rest of the squadron were then at anchor; and then sailed with all of them in company to Naples. During the remainder of the year 1816 the ship cruised along the Barbary coast until the winter had fairly set in, when she with the other vessels repaired to Port Mahon. Although now so close to the spot where his race originated, Farragut's journal betrays no interest in the fact. He was still too young for the sentimental considerations to weigh much in his mind; and it was not till many years later, in the height of his glory as a naval commander, that he visited his father's birthplace, Ciudadela, the capital city of Minorca. In the following spring the squadron resumed its cruising and made quite a round of the Mediterranean west of Italy; the journal mentioning visits to Gibraltar, Malaga, Leghorn, Naples, Sicily, and the cities on the Barbary coast. Farragut made full and intelligent use of the opportunities thus afforded him for seeing the world; and his assiduous habit of observation did much to store his mind with information, which the circumstances of his early life had prevented his gaining in the ordinary ways of school and reading. He was fortunate also at this time in having the society of an intelligent and cultivated man, the chaplain of the Washington, Mr. Charles Folsom. The chaplain in those days was commonly the only schoolmaster the midshipmen had; and their opportunities of learning from him depended very much upon the pressure exercised by the captain to compel the attention of a set of boys. Mr. Folsom, however, was drawn to Farragut by the eager willingness of the latter to acquire, and by his sense of his deficiencies. The manly character which had resisted the temptations to low dissipation, and sought naturally the companionship of the better rather than the worse among his associates, also attracted him. The friendship thus formed became, through a series of incidents, the cause of an unusual opportunity for improvement being offered to Farragut. In the autumn of 1817 Mr. Folsom received the appointment of consul to Tunis, which had just been vacated. The summer cruising of the squadron was drawing to an end, and the winter quarters at Port Mahon about to be resumed. Therefore, while the Washington was lying in Gibraltar, Mr. Folsom wrote to the commander-in-chief, Commodore Chauncey, asking permission to take the young midshipman to spend the winter with him in Tunis, to pursue his education under his care. In the letter he spoke very earnestly of his pupil's zeal for improvement, of his close attention, and ready response to any effort on the part of his instructor. The letter is interesting also in its recognition of Farragut's still existing relations to Captain Porter, "to whose wishes this request can not be repugnant." The letter was dated October 14, 1817; and, the required permission being given, the two friends in the following month sailed from Gibraltar for Marseille as passengers in the sloop-of-war Erie. At Marseille a slight incident occurred which, while not quite creditable to our hero, may have interest as showing natural character. Spending the evening at the house of a Mr. Fitch, he was, much against his will, obliged to play whist, for which he had no fondness. "Not getting along very well with my hand, the party showed great impatience, and I thought were rather insulting in their remarks. One individual went so far as to dash his cards on the table in derision of my play, when I returned the compliment by throwing them at his head. I apologized to Mr. Fitch and retired, much mortified, but my temper had been sorely tried." The display of temper was scarcely more than the provocation justified; and it is noteworthy that during a period when dueling was so common Farragut, though quick to resent, appears never to have been involved in a serious personal difficulty.

Early in 1818 the Erie, carrying Mr. Folsom and his pupil, arrived in Tunis, where the latter remained for nine months, pursuing his studies on the site of the ancient maritime empire of Carthage. He mentions particularly the subjects of mathematics, English literature, French, and Italian. For languages he had great natural aptitude, and in later life was able to converse in several. The monotony of study was varied by the society of the few but agreeable foreign families residing in Tunis, and by occasional excursions in the neighborhood; when the interest of the present was happily blended, under the guidance of such a man as Mr. Folsom, with thoughts upon the past grandeur and history of the Carthaginian empire and the Roman province which had successively flourished on that soil.

In one of these excursions Farragut received a partial stroke of the sun, from the effects of which he suffered for many years.

The period of his stay in Tunis exceeded the original intention, but doubtless with the approval of the commodore. It was brought to a close in the fall of 1818 by an outbreak of the plague, which increased to such an alarming extent that Mr. Folsom felt compelled to send his charge away just when the approach of another winter of comparative idleness for the squadron would have justified a longer stay. But deaths in Tunis had risen to a hundred a day, and all the families were living in a state of complete isolation, the houses being barricaded against outsiders; therefore on the 9th of October Farragut departed in a Genoese brig for Leghorn. Thence, after a quarantine of forty days, he went to Pisa; and from there to Messina, where the squadron had assembled for the winter of 1818-'19.

The friendship between Farragut and Mr. Folsom did not end with this separation. The latter survived to the end of the civil war, and was thus privileged to follow the successful and great career of the admiral to whom, while yet an unformed boy, he had thoughtfully extended a helping hand. As late as 1865 letters passed between the two, showing that both cherished warm recollections of that early association; Mr. Folsom dating his, as though careful to make the coincidence, on the anniversary of the day when he parted with his pupil in the harbor of Tunis and returned alone to the plague-stricken city.

The officers of the United States squadron passed a gay winter in Messina in 1819. Farragut was not yet eighteen years of age, but his bodily development had kept pace with his mental, and he writes that he always held his own at this time in all athletic exercises. The succeeding spring and summer were again spent in routine cruising on board the Franklin, seventy-four, which had taken the place of the Washington. In the fall of 1819 the squadron was in Gibraltar; and there, "after much opposition," Farragut was appointed an acting lieutenant on board the brig Shark. This promotion, coming at so early an age, he afterward looked upon as one of the most important events of his life. "It caused me to feel that I was now associated with men, on an equality, and must act with more circumspection. When I became first lieutenant, my duties were still more important, for in truth I was really commander of the vessel, and yet I was not responsible (as such)—an anomalous position which has spoiled some of our best officers. I consider it a great advantage to obtain command young, having observed, as a general rule, that persons who come into authority late in life shrink from responsibility, and often break down under its weight." This last sentence, coming from a man of such extensive observation, and who bore in his day the responsibility of such weighty decisions, deserves most serious consideration now, when command rank is reached so very late in the United States Navy.

After a short year in the Shark Farragut was ordered to return to the United States, to pass the examination required of all midshipmen before they could be confirmed to the rank of lieutenant. No opportunity offering for passage in a ship-of-war, he embarked in a merchant vessel called the America. On the passage he found himself, with the ship, confronted by an apparent danger, which occasioned a display of the fearlessness and energy always latent in his character. Those were days when piracy was rife upon the seas in the neighborhood of the West Indies and of the Spanish Main. The system was an outgrowth of the privateering carried on by French and Spanish marauders, for they were little better, against both British and neutral commerce during the wars of the French Revolution and Empire; and it had received a fresh impulse from the quarrel then existing between Spain and her American colonies, which since 1810 had been in revolt against the mother country. Privateering, having booty as its sole motive, rapidly tends to indiscriminate robbery, if not held strictly responsible by the country using it; and the remote, extensive, and secluded shores of Cuba, Haïti, and the South American coast defied the careless supervision of the weak Spanish Government. When within a few days' sail of the United States, the America fell in with an armed brig showing the colors of the new Colombian republic; but a flag was little guarantee for the character of a vessel if other signs told against her. Farragut describes both captain and crew of the America as being

so overwhelmed with fear that, though expecting no mercy, they entertained no idea of resistance. Under the circumstances he took command; and having, fortunately, as passengers two seamen from the squadron going home sick, these formed a nucleus around which rallied the courage of the others, paralyzed only through disuse. It was, however, the firmness of the lad of eighteen, supported by his position as an officer and acting upon the two men prepared to recognize him as such, that redeemed the others from imbecility to manhood. The incident had no results, the stranger proving to be a regularly commissioned cruiser, and treating them with civility. Farragut's thoughtful, not to say philosophical, turn of mind was shown in his recorded reflections upon the difference between the conduct of the man-of-war's men and the merchant seamen, which he justly attributed not to inherent difference of natural courage, but to the habit of arms and of contemplating danger under a particular form.

On the 20th of November, 1820, Farragut again landed in the United States, having been absent four years and a half. He felt himself a stranger, having left as a mere boy, and knowing no one but Commodore Porter and his family. His examination soon followed, and was passed; but apparently not quite to his own satisfaction. A period of comparative quiet followed, spent principally in Norfolk, Virginia, during which he formed the attachment which resulted in his first marriage. In May, 1822, he was again ordered to sea in the sloop-of-war John Adams, in which he made a short cruise in the Gulf of Mexico and to Vera Cruz, where the Spanish power in Mexico was then making its last stand in the well-known fortress, San Juan de Ulloa. The ship returned to the United States early in December, 1822, when Farragut found the Mosquito fleet, as it was called, fitting out against the pirates of the Caribbean Sea. Learning that it was to be commanded by his old captain, Commodore David Porter, he asked for and obtained orders to the Greyhound, one of the small vessels composing it, commanded by Lieutenant John Porter, a brother of the commodore.

Since the peace with Great Britain, Captain Porter had been a member of the Board of Navy Commissioners; a body of three officers appointed by an act of Congress passed early in 1815, whose duties were to administer the affairs of the navy under the supervision of the Secretary. Meanwhile the sufferings, not only of American property but of the persons of American citizens, from the prevalence of piracy in the Caribbean Sea, had become unendurable. Ordinary naval vessels were, from their size, unable to enforce a repression for which it was necessary to follow the freebooters and their petty craft into their lairs among the lagoons and creeks of the West India islands. The general outcry rousing the Government to the necessity of further exertion, Captain Porter offered his services to extirpate the nuisance; with the understanding that he was to have and fit out the kind of force he thought necessary for the service. He resigned his position on the board on the 31st of December, 1822; but before that date he had bought and begun to equip eight Chesapeake schooners, of fifty to sixty tons burden, of which the Greyhound, Farragut's new vessel, was one. He also built five rowing barges, unusually large, pulling twenty oars. With these, supported by the ordinary man-of-war schooners, of which several were already in the service, and by the sloops-of-war, he expected to drive the pirates not merely off the sea, but out of their hiding-places.

The commodore put to sea with all his squadron on the 14th of February, 1823. A northeast gale was at once encountered, but the tiny vessels ran through it without any harm. For the next six months Farragut was actively employed in the operations of the little fleet, the Greyhound being one of the five which were sent through the Mona Passage, between Porto Rico and Haïti, and thence ransacked the southern shores of the latter island and of Cuba as far as Cape San Antonio, where Cuba ends. There were many encounters between the pirates and the squadron, sometimes afloat, sometimes ashore, in several of which our officer served, forcing his way with his party through marsh and chaparral and cactus—a service often perilous, always painful and exhausting. His health fortunately held out through it; nor did he take the yellow fever, which, as the summer wore on, made sad havoc among both officers and men. Toward the end of his time he obtained the command of one of the Mosquito schooners, which, however, he held but for a short period; for, not having yet

received his lieutenant's commission, he was relieved by the arrival of an officer of that rank. An interesting incident of this cruise was a meeting with his brother William, then already a lieutenant, whom he had not seen for thirteen years. Soon after that he obtained permission to visit New Orleans; and it is a curious coincidence that the vessel in which he took passage thither was carrying the first load of bricks to build Fort Jackson, one of the defenses of New Orleans, by the passage of which nearly forty years later he began his career as commander-in-chief. His father had then been many years dead; but he met his sister, with whom he had to make acquaintance after so long a separation.

The service of the Mosquito fleet was one of great exposure and privation. "I never owned a bed during my two years and a half in the West Indies," wrote Farragut, "but lay down to rest wherever I found the most comfortable berth." It was, however, effectual, both directly and indirectly, to the suppression of piracy; seconded as it was by the navy of Great Britain, interested like our own country in the security of commerce. Driven off the water, with their lurking-places invaded, their plunder seized, their vessels burned, their occupation afloat gone, the marauders organized themselves into bandits, and turned their predatory practices against the towns and villages. This roused the Spanish governors from the indolent complacency with which they had watched robberies upon foreigners that brought profit rather than loss to their districts. When the evil was thus brought home, the troops were put in motion; and the pirates, beset on both sides, gradually but rapidly disappeared.

This Mosquito war had, however, one very sad result in depriving the navy of the eminent services of Commodore Porter. In 1824 a gratuitous insult, accompanied by outrage, offered to one of his officers, led him to land a party at the town of Foxardo, in Porto Rico, and force an apology from the guilty officials. Although no complaint seems to have been made by Spain, the United States Government took exception to his action and brought him to trial by court-martial. Porter confidently expected an acquittal, having proof that the outrage was wanton, and that the officials had engaged in it to protect some piratical plunder which had been taken into the place. He argued also that the wording of his orders from the department authorized his action. The court, however, found him guilty of an offense which was charged as "disobedience of orders, and conduct unbecoming an officer," and sentenced him to six months' suspension. The sentence was accompanied by the expression that the court "ascribes the conduct of the accused which is deemed censurable to an anxious disposition, on his part, to maintain the honor and advance the interest of the nation and of the service." Indignant at the result, Porter resigned from the navy and took service with the Mexican Republic. After spending there four years of harassing disappointments, the election of General Jackson to the presidency gave him a friend in power. He returned to the United States in October, 1829, under the encouragement of letters from persons closely connected with the new administration. The President offered to nominate him to his old position in the navy, but Porter declined "to associate with the men who sentenced me for upholding the honor of the flag." This, striking a kindred chord in Jackson's breast, elicited a warm note of approval, and he appointed the commodore Consul-General to Algiers. The conquest of that country by France put an end to the office before he could assume the duties. The President then nominated him to be Chargé d'Affaires to Turkey. He went there in August, 1831, became Minister Resident in 1839, and died in this post in 1843.

After his return from the Mosquito fleet, Farragut married, on the 24th of September, 1823, Miss Susan C. Marchant, the daughter of a gentleman of Norfolk, Virginia. He was at this time far from well; fever, which spared him while on that sickly service, having seized him upon arrival in a healthier climate. It was probably due in part to this that two years passed after his marriage before he again joined a ship. During this period he spent some weeks with his bride in the house of Commodore Porter, who had returned temporarily from his squadron to regain his strength after a severe attack of yellow fever. This was probably his last close personal association with his early benefactor, whom the issue of the trial afterward separated from his country; but the correspondence between the two continued through life, Farragut maintaining to the last a grateful recollection of kindness shown to him by one whom he termed his "most venerated friend and commander." As late

as 1835, writing from Constantinople in reply to a letter received from his former ward, Porter, then an ailing and broken man, notices this trait in him: "I have found in yours that treasure of a grateful heart which should be so much prized. I have never looked for any other return than what my feelings gave me, and to find such sentiments of gratitude from you, after all others had forgotten that they had received any benefits from me, is truly refreshing to the feelings." The relations thus testified to are an honor to the memory of both.

## **CHAPTER IV. LIEUTENANT. 1825-1841**

After the termination of his cruise in the Mosquito fleet, and up to the beginning of the Civil War, the story of Farragut's life is for the most part but the record of the routine service of a naval officer in times of peace—periods of distant foreign cruising succeeding to, and being again succeeded by, periods of employment on shore in some of the many duties connected with the administration of the navy. But while in their superficial aspect there is little to distinguish these monotonous years, with their occasional breaks of exceptional incident, from the ordinary experiences of all naval officers, the journal of Farragut shows an activity of mind, a constant habit of observation, especially in professional matters, and a painstaking diligence in embracing every passing opportunity for improvement, which reveal to some extent the causes of his subsequent great successes. It is not indeed always possible to trace the precise connection between this or that observation, this or that course of study, and the later results; it is rather in the constant habit of doing the best at every moment, and in the gradual formation of mental character and correct professional knowledge, that are to be found the fruits of the strenuous exertion made throughout his life by Admiral Farragut. It is a noteworthy, though by no means unprecedented, circumstance that these characteristics obtained little or no recognition during his early and middle career. Unlike the great British admiral, Nelson, no war occurred to bring his high qualities into notice; and, when lacking but a year of Nelson's age when he fell at Trafalgar, Farragut was vainly petitioning the Navy Department for the command of a sloop-of-war in the war with Mexico, although he alleged his intimate knowledge of the scene of operations, the close personal examination he had made of it, and the privilege he had had of witnessing an attack by a French squadron but a few years before.

The early age at which he had left his home, the long absences of his youth, and the death of his father, had all contributed to sever his associations with New Orleans; so that his marriage in Norfolk, as was the case with so many officers of his day, fixed that city as his place of residence when not at sea. It is worthy of remembrance, in connection with his firm determination at a later day to stand by the Union rather than by a section of the country, that the only home Farragut had known out of a ship-of-war was the Southern city where he had twice married, and where the general sentiment was contrary to the course he took. The interest of the fact lies not in its bearing upon the rights or wrongs of the great quarrel that all are now fain to forget, but in showing the rare strength of character which, sustained only by its own clear convictions, resisted the social and friendly influences that overcame so many others.

In August, 1825, Farragut was promoted to be lieutenant, and at the same time ordered to the frigate *Brandywine*, chosen to carry back to France Lafayette, who was just drawing to a close his memorable visit to the United States. The ship sailed from the capes of the Chesapeake in September, reaching Havre after a passage of twenty-five days. From there she went to England, and thence to the Mediterranean, returning to New York in May, 1826. After his arrival Farragut was detached and went to New Haven with his wife, who had become a great sufferer from neuralgia and continued to be an invalid during the remainder of their married life. While living in New Haven he availed himself of the opportunity to attend lectures at Yale College. After his wife's treatment was finished they returned to Norfolk, where he remained until October, 1828, attached to the receiving ship and living on board with Mrs. Farragut. Here the interest which he had showed in the improvement of his own mind was transferred to the ship's boys, most of whom did not even know their letters. Farragut organized a school for these waifs, who at that time were little accustomed to receive such care, and was gratified to find very tangible results in the improvement shown by them. He next received orders

to the sloop-of-war *Vandalia*, which sailed from Philadelphia in the last days of 1828 for the Brazil station. On this cruise, which for him lasted but a year, he for the first time visited the Rio de la Plata and Buenos Ayres, and came in contact with the afterward celebrated dictator of that country, Rosas. The different provinces, whose union is now known by the political name of the Argentine Republic, had, under the later days of Spanish rule, constituted with Bolivia, Paraguay and Uruguay the Viceroyalty of Buenos Ayres. On the 25th of May, 1810, a declaration of independence was issued in the city of Buenos Ayres. A long period of disturbance, internal and external, followed. At the time of this first visit of Farragut a contest had for some time been going on between two parties, representing two opposite political ideas, and striving in arms for the control of the State. The ideal of one was a strong centralized government supported by a powerful standing army. This naturally found its most numerous constituents among the wealthy and educated inhabitants of the principal city, Buenos Ayres. The province of the same name, however, and the other provinces generally, favored a looser form of confederation. The former party, known as the Unitarios, held a brief lease of power; but their opponents found an able leader in Juan Manuel de Rosas, who personified the best and worst features of the *gaucho* of the pampas and obtained unbounded popularity and following among those wild herdsmen. In 1828 Rosas and his allies forced the Unitarian president to resign, and installed one of themselves, named Dorrego, as governor of Buenos Ayres. This success was but one step in the series of bloody struggles which ended in the establishment of the dictator; but it marked the point at which Farragut first saw Buenos Ayres and Rosas himself, with whom he was at a later date thrown in intimate contact and who at that moment was in the full flush of his early popularity.

In December, 1829, Farragut's eyes were in such bad condition that it was found necessary to send him home. He arrived in February, 1830, and remained in Norfolk for a period of nearly three years, broken only by occasional absences. During a part of this time he was again attached to the receiving ship in the port; and, as before, manifested an interest, unusual in those days, in those under his command. One of these, then a midshipman, writes to the author that he still recalls, after the lapse of nearly sixty years, the kindness, consideration and hospitality shown him by the future admiral, who was then known through the service as the "Little Luff" Farragut—luff being a naval abbreviation, now obsolete, for lieutenant. But with all his kindness there was no relaxation in the enforcement of necessary duty. In December, 1832, he was again ordered to sea in the sloop-of-war *Natchez*, as her first lieutenant; or, as the expression now is, as executive officer. It was the time of the nullification troubles in South Carolina, and the ship was first sent to anchor near Charleston, where she would be prepared to support the authority of the United States Government. Fortunately, no occasion arose for her to act; and a stay which began with taking precautions against possible fire-ships from the city, ended in a series of balls and general exchanges of courtesy between the officers and the citizens. In April, 1833, the *Natchez* returned to Hampton Roads; and the following month sailed, carrying Farragut back again to the Brazils. On the 30th of July he was again at anchor, in his new ship, off Buenos Ayres. Since his former visit the country had passed through much trouble. A confederation had been formed between the principal provinces, in January, 1831, based upon the loosest ties of union; but the army had become dissatisfied with the progress of changes which arose largely from jealousy of the military power, and had risen in revolt under the leadership of a general named Lavalle, who for a time had sided with Rosas. He met at first with success, defeated Dorrego and Rosas, and put the former to death; but Rosas rallied again, defeated Lavalle, and became in his place head of the army and governor of Buenos Ayres. To this position he was re-elected in 1832, and by virtue of it he was, at the time of Farragut's second visit, in chief control of the external policy and internal affairs of the confederation; the principal and seaboard province inevitably taking the lead and representing the country under even the loosest form of combination. Disturbed though the internal state of affairs was, Rosas's strong hand appears to have so far preserved the safety of foreigners as to give no cause for the interference of their ships-of-war. Farragut's stay on the station was, however, again cut short. The schooner *Boxer* arrived in Rio Janeiro on her way home from the

East Indies; and it becoming necessary to give her a new commanding officer, he received orders to take her to the United States. He sailed in her on the 8th of June, 1834, and on the 25th of July reached Norfolk, where the vessel was put out of commission and he again returned to his family. A period of nearly four years of shore duty followed. During the latter two of these Farragut was a constant applicant for sea service, which he could not obtain. His wife was at this time becoming ever weaker and weaker. "I was necessarily confined very much to the house," he writes, "for my wife was so helpless I was obliged to lift her and carry her about like a child." His tender and untiring devotion to the suffering invalid was no less conspicuous than his careful attention to the other duties of life, and was the constant remark of those who were witnesses of this sorrowful period.

In April, 1838, Farragut was again ordered to sea in the home squadron, and in the following August, though still only a lieutenant, took command, in Pensacola, of the sloop-of-war *Erie*; a position that could only be temporary, because belonging naturally to an officer of higher rank. It fell to him, however, at a period of peculiar interest—when France became involved with Mexico in one of those brief hostilities by which alone were broken the long years of peace between Waterloo and the Crimean War. The quarrel between the two was simply as to the reparation due to French subjects for injuries received during the long years of confusion through which Mexico then had been and still was passing. As a political question it possesses no present interest whatever; but to a naval officer of Farragut's strong professional feeling and close habits of observation it offered a peculiar opportunity for noting the silent progress made during the long peace by the material of war among the navies of Europe, where the necessity of constant preparation insures an advance in which the United States then, as now, tended to lag behind. It supplied also a test, under certain conditions, of the much-vexed question of the power of ships against forts; for the French squadron, though few in numbers, deliberately undertook to batter by horizontal fire, as well as to bombard, in the more correct sense of the word, with the vertical fire of mortars, the long renowned castle of San Juan de Ulloa, the chief defense of Vera Cruz. It was still the day of sailing-ships, both of war and of commerce. But a few years had elapsed since a man of considerable scientific attainment had pronounced the crossing of the Atlantic to be impossible to vessels depending upon steam power alone; and only in the same year as the French attack on Vera Cruz (1838) had been seen the falsification of the prediction by the passage of the *Sirius* and *Great Western* from England to New York.

As a first means of compulsion, the French Government had in 1837 established a blockade of the Atlantic ports of Mexico. In two months the Mexican treasury lost two million dollars in duties, which would have been collected if the ships turned away had been permitted to enter; but the Government and people seemed little moved by a result that merely added one more to the many ills with which they were already afflicted. The question was then raised by the French authorities, diplomatic and military, whether the possession of the fortress of San Juan de Ulloa, which commanded the city of Vera Cruz, the most important of the coast ports, would not also confer control of a great part of the seaboard, and thus enforce a security not otherwise obtainable for the persons and property of French subjects. Blockade, though a less extreme measure, was difficult, protracted, and productive of serious loss. The violent northerly gales of winter exposed the ships to peril, and the yellow fever of the summer months was deadly to the crews. Moreover, the deprivation of commerce, though a bitter evil to a settled community whose members were accustomed to the wealth, luxury, and quiet life attendant upon uninterrupted mercantile pursuits, had been proved ineffective when applied to a people to whom quiet and luxuries were the unrealized words of a dream. The French Government speedily determined to abandon the half-measure for one of more certain results; and in October, 1838, began to arrive the ships of an expedition destined to proceed to open hostilities, under the command of Admiral Baudin, a veteran of the Napoleonic wars. Appointed in the navy in 1799, immediately after the return from Egypt and the establishment of the Consulate, by the direct intervention of Bonaparte, who was a friend of his father's, Baudin had served with distinction until the fall of the empire, losing his right arm in battle; and after Waterloo it was he who

made the proposition, familiar to all readers of Napoleon's life, to cover the escape of the Emperor from Rochefort by sacrificing the ships under his command in an heroic resistance to the English cruisers while the vessel bearing the fallen monarch escaped. "Sixteen years ago," said he, "my father died of joy upon learning the return from Egypt of General Bonaparte; and I myself to-day would die of grief to see the Emperor leave France if I thought that by remaining he could again do aught for her. But he must leave her only to live honored in a free country, not to die a prisoner to our rivals." Such was that career, belonging to an early and singular generation, which here for a moment crossed and linked with that of the great naval hero of our own days. Farragut has recorded his impression of him. "Admiral Baudin," he writes, "would be undoubtedly a *rara avis* in any navy. He is about fifty years of age (he was fifty-four), has lost his right arm, looks like a North of Europe man, has a fine address, and speaks English well. He has every mark of a polished seaman and officer, with the expression of great decision, with firmness and activity to execute his well-digested plans. These were my remarks the first time I saw him, and his subsequent conduct soon proved I was right." His French biographer makes a remark, commonplace enough, which yet notes the essential difference in the lot of the two gallant men who thus casually met. "For the few who allow occasions to escape them, how many could justly complain that a chance has never been offered them? Admiral Baudin never had the opportunity to which his capacities suited him; all his aptitudes designated him for war on a great scale; a man such as he, succeeding Latouche-Tréville, would have saved us the sorrows of Trafalgar." Farragut was fortunate, for in him the opportunity and the man met in happy combination.

When he reached his station, Admiral Baudin suffered no time to be lost. The wintry gales were approaching, while, on the other hand, his first experience showed the miseries of disease on that sickly coast. Of the two frigates there before he came, which had been blockading during the summer, one had buried forty-five seamen and five officers out of a ship's company of four hundred men; the other, at the time of his arrival, had three hundred and forty-three sick among a crew of five hundred. With such conditions, trifling is out of place. An ultimatum was at once sent to the Mexican Government, a brief time only being allowed for a reply, because the claims of the French cabinet were already clearly understood. On the 25th of November the last of his squadron, two bomb-vessels, arrived. On the 21st he had given notice that he would wait till noon of the 27th for the final decision. On the 28th the attack was made.

The castle of San Juan de Ulloa lies half a mile east and to seaward of the city of Vera Cruz, which it commands, and from which it is separated by water averaging from fifteen to twenty feet deep. It is built on the inner extremity of a reef that extends from it a little over a mile to the eastward, in the general prolongation of the line connecting the castle and the town. This shoal being covered by a foot or two of water, the builders of the fort counted upon it for protection in that direction against ships, and against attack, either by regular approaches or by escalade. The work itself was in general outline a parallelogram, with bastions at the four angles. The longer sides fronted the east and west; and of these the former, facing the shoal and the open gulf, contained the gate of the fortress and was covered by a demi-lune and line of water batteries. There were mounted in the castle and dependent works, at the time of the French attacks, one hundred and eighty-six cannon. The strength of the fortifications, the number of the guns, and the character of the surroundings, had all contributed to bestow upon San Juan de Ulloa the reputation of being the strongest position in Spanish America. It was, indeed, considered impregnable to naval attack, for the best hope of ships under such circumstances is to approach closely and drive the defenders from their guns by the superior number and weight of the pieces opposed to them; but in San Juan this was forbidden by the extent and formation of the reef. Like most coral banks, this rises sheer from the bottom, making the approach very dangerous to vessels dependent only upon sail-power; and the ground about it, though not too deep for anchorage, is rocky and foul.

Admiral Baudin, however, was thoroughly acquainted with the weak points of the fortress, through information obtained from Madrid; where plans of the works, dating from the times of the

Spanish occupancy, were on file. He possessed also two steamers, the first to cross the Atlantic under the French flag, by aid of which, though small and of weak power, he could count upon placing his sailing frigates exactly where he wished them. Finally, the wretched condition of the Mexican forces, demoralized by years of irregular warfare and internal commotion, and miserably provided with material of war, gave additional chances of success.

On the morning of November 28th the two steamers towed the bomb-vessels to the eastern extremity of the reef, a little over a mile from the castle. Next two of the frigates were taken by them and anchored close to the reef, southeast from the works and distant from them half a mile. The third frigate, using her sails alone, succeeded in taking position a little ahead of her consorts. These operations were all completed before noon and were conducted under the eyes of the Mexicans, who were restrained from impeding them by the orders of their Government not to fire the first gun. A delay followed, owing to a flag of truce coming from the shore; but the proposition brought by it proved unacceptable, and the squadron opened fire at half-past two. Between that and sundown the three frigates, aided only by a small corvette which attacked under way, poured upon the castle 7,771 round shot and 177 shell, the mortar-vessels at the same time throwing in 302 bombs. At eight the fire ceased, and negotiations began. The following day, at noon, the castle was delivered into the hands of the French, who placed a garrison in it. "It was high time," said Admiral Baudin; "the wind was freshening, the sea getting up, and the anchors were breaking like glass upon the bottom, composed of sharp rocks." But the loss among the defenders had been so great, and the re-enforcements at hand were so few, that further resistance was impracticable.

The terms of the convention made by the commander of the Mexican forces had stipulated that only a certain number of troops should constitute the garrison of Vera Cruz until the affairs between the two nations were settled; but upon the 4th of December the French admiral learned, to his great indignation, that the Mexican Government had disavowed the action of the general, declared war against France, and was throwing re-enforcements into the city. He immediately took measures to disarm the works which might threaten his fleet at their anchorage, hoping at the same time, by surprising the enemy, to gain possession of Santa Anna, the new commander of the troops and then the most prominent man in Mexico. While the French were making their preparations in secret, Farragut went on shore and called upon Santa Anna, who promised to care for the persons and property of American citizens, adding: "Tell President Van Buren that we are all one family, and must be united against Europeans obtaining a foothold on this continent."

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